

# **ANTAGONISM OF ALCOHOL AND DIPHTHERIA**

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Antagonism of Alcohol and Diphtheria by E. N. Chapman

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**E. N. CHAPMAN**

**ANTAGONISM OF  
ALCOHOL AND  
DIPHTHERIA**



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## PREFACE.

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I am induced to present this little work to the profession for several very good and sufficient reasons. Diphtheria prevails throughout the country, and numbers its victims by thousands. No remedy to stay its ravages, or to check even its onward march, has been found—albeit, chemistry, the microscope, and all other resources of rational medicine have been taxed to the utmost. At this juncture, when theory, exhausted in empty dreams, tries to comfort itself with the conclusion that diphtheria is a self-limited disease, and hence admits of little modification, other than that produced by a sustaining course of medication, I have thought it opportune to submit to the medical world certain empirical facts—facts that have been accumulating the past seventeen and a half years. These show, beyond cavil, that alcohol has, in my hands, proved itself, when most physicians have been losing every third or fourth case, not only a valuable medicine, but a

trustworthy antidote—one capable of saving ninety-five *per cent.* in severe epidemics. With me, this scourge, thus robbed of its terrors, causes no more anxiety than many common ailments. Of a certainty, I expect to succeed, unless the long delay in seeking advice has allowed the poison to do its work, and thus forestalled the specific virtues of this remedy of remedies.

These high pretensions, that cannot but seem absurd to one who has not submitted them to the crucial test of practice, have been sustained by many leading physicians of this city who have done me the honor to try my treatment. All have reduced the death-rate to a low figure, some have met with a success equal to mine, and three having been, *in propria persona*, a battlefield for alcohol and diphtheria, have kindly allowed me the privilege of using their names in a circular to our brethren in other parts of the country.

I must apologize for the dress in which I appear in public. Deeming it important, however, to make known, with the least loss of time practicable, the antidotal powers of alcohol in diph-

theria, I have been constrained, in view of the general distrust expressed of late in every plan of medication, to throw together, with some show of order, matter hitherto published. I trust, however, that my faulty exterior will not bar me an audience, seeing that the details of treatment—the all-absorbing subject in the face of disease—are fully and precisely given, under many and diverse conditions.

BROOKLYN, May, 1878.





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CHAPTER I.

TREATMENT OF DIPHTHERIA, AS AFFIRMED IN '63,  
AND RE-AFFIRMED IN '77.

The treatment of diphtheria\* has, the last ten years, been so thoroughly and exhaustively discussed, that it would seem the height of folly, at this late day, to question the matured opinions of practitioners and writers the world over. Nevertheless, from the fatality of this deadly scourge, as it is universally considered, I am induced to offer my experience in a plan of medication which has, after a trial of more than fifteen years, been crowned with a success that throws every other, however pretentious, into the shade. To substantiate this bold statement, I shall appeal for proof to the records of the Board of Health of this city, a set of books as certain to dissipate groundless assumptions as to establish sterling

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\* *Buffalo Medical and Surgical Journal*, October, '77.

facts. The revelations of microscopy, the researches of chemistry, the flights of theory, and the deductions of reason are of little avail in the face of the enemy, when the urgent practical question—the empirical fact—what will cure the patient, waits a solution.

In '58 and '60, whilst employing the means then in vogue, I lost every third or fourth case—a frightful mortality, yet one many physicians bemoan even now; but immediately after instituting an opposite treatment, though the epidemic was at its worst, not more than one in twenty. This treatment, which I have since seen no reason to change, or even to modify in any essential particular, was, together with the cases presented in its support, published in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal*, February 5th, '63. In this article, reasoning from results to causes, I came to the conclusion that diphtheria is a disease of the blood—a disease tending to rapidly destroy the vitality of that fluid; that the exudation is secondary to this contamination—a local manifestation of a general dyscrasy; that the fever is symptomatic—the turmoil excited by the intrusion of a deadly agent; that alcohol counteracts, neutralizes, or destroys the poison, whatever it may be, acting, in fact, like a true antidote, if promptly and liberally given; that the membrane falls and does not reappear, directly the blood fails to offer the proper pabulum for its